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# An Investigation into the Mental Health States of Payamnoor University's Students in Ilam Province

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine “How is the mental health condition of Payam Noor freshmen students University in Ilam province”? The design of this study was applicable-descriptive. This study used survey to collect data. Participants were all of the freshmen students of Ilam Payam noor University. The study selected 560 BA and BSc students through stratified sampling. Providing the descriptive criterion of data, this study used Pearson Product Moment correlation to analyze data. Results indicated that 68 percent of students are in the appropriate condition and 32 percent of them are suspected to be health mentally. The findings showed that profiting from the religious beliefs has a reverse association with mental health disorders, social support, Suicide risk, drug consumption risk, but it has a direct association with the methods coping with a stress based on Problem-solving and Problem-orientation. Results showed that the suicide risk has a direct and significant relationship with the rate of mental health and the methods coping with the excitement-oriented and avoidance stresses have reverse and significant relationship with the problem-oriented method and social support. Students are the most intelligent and talented individuals of society and undoubtedly, their physical and mental health play an important role in growth and the dynamics of society. Therefore, schedule to flourish talents and retain the health of students are among the main purposes of educational institutions and the universities of country.

Key words: mental health, religious beliefs, social support, stress management, students

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## Introduction

Health is a quality of life which its definition is difficult or even its measurement is impossible. Specialists have provided many different definitions for this construct; but most of these definitions have a subject in common and it is self-responsibility and choosing a healthy life style (Babapoor, 2002).

In the definition of health, some scientists refer to the medical, environmental and holistic models. General belief of medical model is that health means the absent of one or more such cases as death, disease, discomfort, disability and grievance which it is called “5d” in English. The medical model is not concerned with the social problems which affect on health, and it cannot present an exact understanding of the health in terms of psychological and social factors.

The environmental pattern has been appeared from a modern analysis of Ecosystem and environmental risks to the health of human being. The environmental model consists of the effects of economic, social, teaching and multi-factorial environmental conditions on the person's health. The holistic model defines health in terms of the whole person but not in terms of disease part of body.

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The holistic model involves physiological, mental, emotional, social spiritual and environmental aspects of people and communities and it focuses on the optimum health, the prevention from illness, and positive emotional and mental states (Hermon and Hezler, 1999). At the same time, today the World Health Organization (2004) refers to the health as a state of total physical, mental and social welfare but not merely the absence of disease. In different schools, mental illness and mental health have been defined differently; for example, Freud has presented the mental health as the being of equilibrium and harmony among heart, and also self-conscious and self-unconscious (Shafie Abadi, 1989).

To achieve the minimum development which is a synonym of evolution is in fact the life philosophy from Islam's point of view and the result of believing in God. Affections of mental disorders were treated as illness, and when there are the signs of stopping connections with the fact in a person, the term "insane" has been given which prevents a person from doing religious affairs and even from the right of intervention in his properties (Hosseini, 1374).

Students as the creative and reflective human being have a special position in the development of any society; therefore, providing their mental health has a double importance. Because of the transferring nature of their lives, students are always exposed to stress. These factors can be a combination of internal stimuli such as personality and external factors such as environmental stressful factors. Excessive stresses and pressures among students often lead to the educational failure, unemployment, health problem, weakness in performance, education drop-out and in some cases, suicide and killing others. Therefore, the vulnerability of student's stratum against different problems and stresses can cause them suffering from different kinds of psychological problems and disorganizing their mental health (Monk and Mahmood, 1999).

Many studies have shown that the mental disorders have a high prevalence among university students (Belanco and Colleagues, 2008) and these disorders increase in terms of both number and intensity day by day (American Health Institution of Universities, 2008; National Center of Counseling and Surveying Disorders in American, 2008).

Also, in Iran, the result of several annual studies of the central office of science ministry student's counseling have suggested that between 13/5% to 27% of students entering in the years of 2004-2008 have suffered from different mental problems. In Iran, the study results of the central office of science ministry student's counseling have suggested that 13/5 percent of students suffered from different mental problems, 9/9 percent of male students and 7/3 percent of female students have reported the thoughts of suicide; 4/7 percent of students have had a conscious action to kill him/herself. Mohammadian and colleagues (2007) indicated that 38/5 percent of male students of Ilam medical sciences university smoke. In Shiraz University Moradimanesh and Colleagues (2007) indicated that 18/5 percent of students have a depressive disorder. In psychological level, it can be referred to specific factors and variables as vulnerable indices, for example, the satisfaction rate from life, social support, the specific ways against stress, drug consumption and so on.

On this basis, some factors can help the universities planners and administrators serve prevention programs and intervenient actions in order to provide and improve the students' mental health status when they enter university, identifying the students who are exposed to risk because of not having the suitable coping skills and social supports and also identifying the symptoms of vulnerability against suicide and drug consumption. Because of the importance of students' mental health and the impact of this issue on the future of this stratum of society as well as the country future (Azad, 1385), the main questions of this study are "How is the mental health status of Payamnoor University students?" and "How is the association of mental health with the variables of social support, coping with stress, religious beliefs and being at the exposed to drugs?"

### **Research method:**

This study is a fundamental and survey research. Its participants involve all the Payamnoor University students who entered university in 1388-89 education year in Ilam province. The participants were 560 students which were chosen in a cluster sampling way at 5 branches of Payamnoor University. The instruments of this study are a questionnaire containing 19 demography articles and a questionnaire with 92 articles which has been designed by the experts of counseling central office of science, researches and technology ministry by using of different associated questionnaires (General health questionnaire, coping styles questionnaire, social support questionnaire, measuring investigation of drugs and alcohol, the questionnaire of riddling the youth at risk) and contain different

dimensions such as demographic information, protective and risk factors, coping styles, factors associated with suicide and attitudes towards counseling.

### Results:

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Student's Mental Health Status

Mental Health Status	Frequency	Percentage
Students having mental health	381	68
Students having psychological problems	179	32
Total	560	100

The results indicated that 68 percent of students were in the good status in terms of mental health and 32 percent of them were suspicious to have mental health problems.

Table2: Comparison of the Average of Social Support to the Gender Breakdown

Gender	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Freedom degree	T	Level of confidence	Level of significance
Male	172	2/98	1/41	558	-3/43	0/001	0/05
Female	388	3/37	1/14				

About the social support, the result showed that the female students had a more social support than the male students.

An investigation of the relationship between the rate of profiting the students' religious beliefs and the mental health level, social support, the methods of coping with stress, being at expose to suicide and drug consumption showed that the religious beliefs have a reverse relationship with mental health problems, social support, suicide risk and the risk of drug consumption but they have a direct relationship with the methods of coping with stress based on Problem-solving and Problem-orientation.

Table3: matrix of correlation coefficient about the rate of Profiting Students' Religious Beliefs with Mental Health, social support and methods coping with stress

Variable	Methods to cope with stress					
	Mental health	Suicide risk	The risk of drug consumption	Problem-oriented	Excitement -oriented	Avoidance
To profit the religious beliefs	-0/11*	-0/18*	-0/13*	0/13*	-0/018	-0/013

$P \leq 0/05^*$

Investigating the relationship between the rate of students' mental health and having social support and the methods to cope with stress has shown that the mental health problems have a reverse association with social support and the methods coping with Problem-oriented stress but they have a direct association with the methods coping with Excitement -oriented stress. Because getting a high score in the mental health questionnaire is a sign of health problems, therefore it can be said that mental health reinforce when the rate of social support and the methods coping with Problem-oriented stress increase.

Table4: Matrix of Correlation Coefficient of Mental Health with Social Support and Coping Methods with Stress

Variable	Methods coping with stress			
	Social support	Problem-oriented	Excitement -oriented	Avoidance
Mental health	-0/33*	-0/17	0/19*	0/06*

$P \leq 0/05^*$

Investigating the relationship between the rate of being at suicide risk of students and mental health, having social support and the methods coping with stress have showed that the suicide risk has a direct and significant association with the mental health rate, and the methods coping with Excitement -oriented and avoidance stress but it has a reverse and significant association with Problem-oriented method and social support.

**Table 5: Matrix of Correlation Coefficient about being at Expose to Suicide Risk, Social Support and Mental Health**

Variable	Methods coping with stress				
	Mental health	Social support	Problem-oriented	Excitement - oriented	Avoidance
Suicide risk	0/54*	-0/33*	-0/14*	0/28*	0/10*

$P \leq 0/05^*$

Investigating the relationship between the rate of being at the drug consumption risk of students and mental health, having social support and methods coping with stress have shown that being at the drug consumption risk has a direct and significant association with the rate of mental health problems and methods coping with Excitement – oriented stress; but it has a reverse and significant association with the rate of social support and the method coping with Problem-oriented stress.

**Table 6: Matrix of Correlation Coefficient about being at the Drug Consumption Risk and Profiting the Religious Beliefs, Social Support and Mental Health**

Variable	Methods coping with stress				
	Mental health	Social support	Problem-oriented	Excitement - oriented	Avoidance
Being at drug risk	0/26*	-0/21*	-0/13*	0/10*	0/09

$P \leq 0/05^*$

### Discussion and conclusion:

A main principle of human being health, besides having a physical health, is to have a mental health. One of the fundamental necessities of a student's life which paying attention to it has a direct impact on the development of a society and its consideration is a basic condition to profit from the educated and efficient individuals, is the students' mental health. Because the mental health is "an individual's compromise with the world around him by the maximum possibility so that it causes happiness" (Tavakoli, 1384, as cited in Shirvani and colleagues, 1388).

The findings of the present study showed that 32 percent of students suffered from psychological problems to some extent. The findings of the study have a congruence with the studies of Bakhshian and Mohammadkhani (1387) (32/9%), and Kikhavandi (1383) (37%). But it doesn't have a congruence with the studies of Moradi, Alili and Payravi(1380) (11/9%), Asadi and colleagues(1387), Mohammadi Aria and colleagues(1383) (12/1%),Saki(1380) (53%), Yaghobi(2376) (18%), Baghei Yazdi and colleagues(1374) (16/5%), Moradi and colleagues(2001) (14/3%), Ghobari Banab and colleagues(1385) (20/3%), Del Azar and colleagues(1386) (12/7%), Selgi and colleagues(1385) (50%), Yaghobi and colleagues(1389) (18/1%), Poorsharif and colleagues(1384)(13/2%), Sohrabi and colleagues(1386) (13/5%), Yaghobi and colleagues(1387) (21/1%), Yaghobi and colleagues(1388) (18/4%). Because the Payamnoor University's students were psychologically suspicious to mental disorders with high percentage, so it is necessary for the university to design exact and comprehensive programs, especially in the field of acting counseling centers, in order to reinforce the students' mental health.

The findings showed that profiting from the religious beliefs has a reverse association with mental health disorders, social support, Suicide risk, drug consumption risk, but it has a direct association with the methods coping with a stress based on Problem- solving and Problem-orientation.

In modern studies, it has been shown that the importance of being religious is more than before in keeping mental health in the adolescence and youth periods (Pachovich, 2003, as cited in Salehi, 1383).

In Pachovich study (2003), it became clear that the feeling of being religious more in the adolescence and youth periods causes to become sociable better, more efficient against conflicts, more hopefulness in reaching to objectives, decreasing anxiety, depression and aggression.

The results of this study have a congruence with the studies' results of Jamali (1383), Azizi (1380), Golzari (1379), Tahmasebi and Amini (1383), Bayazi and Saremi (1386), Tayri and Amini (1386), Babadi and colleagues (1385), Zandi Dareh Gharibi (1386), Rahimi and Kamran poor (1386), Taleghani and colleagues (1386), Nasri (1380), Abloghasemi (1383), Shokrkon and colleagues (1383), Zarea and colleagues (1386), Omidian and Masomi (1385), Sharifi (1384) and Tahmasebi (1385).

Moreover, the studies of Kaldistid (1996), Kokeh (1992), Golen (1997), Koling, George and Titos (2004), Ripentrop and colleagues (2005), Beirman (2008), Alderich (1996), Pargament (1997), Gorsach and Smith (1983), Spealk (1989), Shapiro and colleagues (1996), Sloan and colleagues (1999), Nilson (1995), Ellison (1994), Malz (1999), Vist (2000) and Torbit (1997) confirm the significant positive relationship between religion and mental health which are homolateral with the findings of this study. During human being history, religion and religious beliefs have been a part of vital and fundamental needs of human beings life, and the needs to reach to peace against the environment stresses or the treatment of some mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, guilt feeling, scruple and physical diseases have played an important role in the human evolution. In order to promote the mental health level of students, it is recommended that the religious trainings are considered in planning programs especially through lesson units.

The findings also showed that the mental health problems had a reverse association with social support and methods coping with problem-oriented stress and a direct association with the method of excitement-oriented stress.

Strobe and colleagues (2005) have reported that the more the individual receives supports from the others, the more mental health he has. The related researches have confirmed the impact of supportive resources of family, friends and relatives on the individuals' mental health. These findings have a congruence with the findings of Bakhshipoor Roodsari and colleagues (1384), Chin Aveh and colleagues (1383), Mirsamiei (1385), Noorimoghadam and Roashan (1385). The researches findings of key Donaldson (1991), Frich Van, Shen Zal (1383), Lindzy and Tampson (1988), Bernandez (1998), Newland and Fornham (1999), Chang (2000), key Johnson and Hunt (2002), Bright Get (2002), Maccorat Raifman (2002), Krinberg and colleagues (1990), Kellowson (1979), Wadnel (1979), Eshnider and Wared (2003), Kahen Wehnselin Rosel (2003), Feraro (1987), Ben Ari and Geil (2004), and Gens Vazlid (2004) support this finding (As cited in Zaki, 1385). Moreover, the studies of klingberg and colleagues (2006), Peter and Franks (2002), Hogan Lizen and Najarian (2002). Croger and Rizenchel wager (2007), Ottsi and colleagues (2006), Recona (1995), Lonion and colleagues (1977), Garnfeski and Diskens (1996), Peter and Frank (2002), March Pilsok and Chalz Ferolond (2004), Foladvand (1386), Ghazanfari (1383), Ganaii and colleagues (1383), Fatthi and colleagues (1388), Sohabi and Najafi (1386) have found a significant relationship between support and mental health. Therefore, the supportive umbrella of family, friends, and the important individuals in the student's life and also the powerful relationships and associations can help them to have a better adjustment with the life problems. So, in order to promote the student's health and succulence it must be created strong networks of social relationships and interpersonal communications through different programs especially social –cultural programs in Payam-Noor Universities.

Results showed that the suicide risk has a direct and significant relationship with the rate of mental health and the methods coping with the excitement-oriented and avoidance stresses have reverse and significant relationship with the problem-oriented method and social support.

The increasing of mental health rata and getting profit from the methods coping with stress and more enjoying social support associate with the rata of suicide risk. This finding has a congruence with studies of Loinson (1994), Pefifer and colleagues (1993), Yung and Kelam (1994), Poorsharifi and colleagues (1384), Sohrabi and colleagues (1386), and Yaghoobi and colleagues (1387).

In different studies, enjoying social support and religious beliefs has cited as an effective factor in preventing of suicide and the present study has confirmed this matter. In fact, social support and religious beliefs act as a shield or protector against an attitude to suicide. So, the rain for cement of social support, religious beliefs, coping styles and the health promotion should be the pivot of programs to prevent suicide. Teaching of problem-oriented methods to students being at the suicide risk will be a useful factor to decrease the act of successful and unsuccessful suicide in students, which this important issue can be done in educational programs of universities.

The findings showed that being at the drugs consumption risk has a direct and significant relationship with the rate of mental health problems and methods coping excitement-oriented stress but it has a reverse and significant relationship with the rate of social support and the method coping with problem-oriented stress.

There is a contrary correlation between social support and being at the drugs consumption risk. This means that the weak social support and the lack of enough availability to social support can be one of the main factors which increases the drugs risk and if a person be deprived from supportive resources, he/she is more in the expose of drugs consumption risk. Based on the results of this study and the other related studies, it can be said that the suitable social support and high religion are as a shield against the tendency to consump drugs.

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